



Open Textbook Workshop Summary

hosted by

Council of Atlantic University Libraries / Conseil des bibliothèques universitaires de l'Atlantique

EVENT DETAILS

Thursday, February 19th, 2015

1:00 - 4:00 pm AST

Room 1009, Kenneth C. Rowe Management Building
Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS

PURPOSE

The Open Textbook Workshop was intended to raise awareness about open textbooks and how these resources are being implemented by institutions across Canada.

SPEAKERS

Amanda Coolidge - Manager, Open Education at BCcampus

Amanda supports the development and sharing of open educational resources in BC. She project manages the adoption, adaptation, and creation of OER and provides technical and instructional design support for the B.C. Open Textbook Project.

Clint Lalonde - Senior Manager, Open Education at BCcampus

Clint supports the development and sharing of open educational resources in BC. He manages SOL*R (the BC open learning repository), and is actively involved in the research of educational technologies that support both online and blended teaching and learning practice. Clint is also responsible for the technical development of open platforms that support the B.C. Open Textbook project.

Leva Lee - Manager, Professional Learning and Open Education Resources at BCcampus

As a member of the Steering Committee for ETUG (SCETUG), Leva works with the Chair and a committee of volunteers from BC post-secondary institutions to organize professional learning activities and events for its membership such as the annual ETUG Fall and Spring workshops. She also helps to facilitate the work of the BCOER, a group of BC post-secondary librarians working together since December 2013 to support the use of quality Open Education Resources (OER).

Mark Leggott - University Librarian, University of Prince Edward Island

Mark has been the University Librarian at UPEI since 2006 and is a long-time open source advocate. He is involved in the development of the Open Textbooks Project at UPEI, which began in October 2012. Mark is also the President of DiscoveryGarden and Founder of Islandora.

SUMMARY

The speakers from BCcampus divided their presentation into three sections: issues surrounding textbooks and driving factors for the BCcampus Open Textbook Project, details about the project and adaptations, and a specific outreach initiative by librarians.

Mark Leggott then spoke about the history and progress of UPEI's Open Textbook Project.

1. *Factors leading to the creation of the BCcampus Open Textbook Project*

- The primary goal of BCcampus is to encourage collaboration, achieved through work in three areas: student services and data exchange, collaborative programs and shared services, and open education and professional learning.
- BCcampus is funded by the BC Ministry of Advanced Education.
- BCcampus formerly used a BC Commons license, but now work exclusively with Creative Commons licenses.
- Several issues surrounding increasing textbook costs:
 - Students have immense debt that they are unable to pay off, causing students to delay other life milestones (house, marriage, kids).
 - Cost of textbooks has increased quicker than the cost of living. After tuition, textbooks are the second largest expense for students.
 - Craig Richardson referred to the principle agent problem, being that prices are unchecked and increasing because the buyer (student) is removed from the ordering decisions ([The Wall Street Journal, Jan 13, 2015](#)). The discussion emphasized the importance of starting conversations between faculty and publishers about textbook costs.
 - If cost becomes a barrier, students may not buy the books, causing student success to suffer. According to the US Public Interest Research Groups, 65% of students have not purchased a textbook for their course due to price (Fixing the Broken Textbook Market, US PIRG).
 - Students are forced to take fewer classes due to textbook costs, extending their education and increasing their debt.
 - Frequency of new editions forces students to purchase new textbooks.
 - As more publishers switch from print to electronic resources, students often do not have perpetual access to the electronic resources they purchase.
 - Students are not getting immediate access to resources when the term begins, causing them to fall behind in classes.
 - Open textbooks are not the solution to everything, but they can help with these issues.
- Research shows that some students prefer print to digital, though the reasons are not often discussed. While the physical aspect is a large factor, print versions also enable students to sell the book and earn back part of the cost.
- Be sure to evaluate research data, to explore *why* trends are appearing.
- Several ways that students avoid buying textbooks include borrowing from classmates, downloading, and student projects like the [Textbook Liberation Project](#) at the University of South Florida.
- It is a common misconception that open textbooks are simply free and electronic. While that is true, it is the open license that makes an open textbook.
- The BCcampus Open Textbook Project aims to offer students more options and resources. They began by adapting books before creating new books.
- Texts are available in a variety of technical formats.
- David Wiley's 5 R's of Openness: Retain, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute.
- Case study: Houston Community College found that students were struggling in entrance level psychology. Many students could not afford the books and were using alternative books or no textbooks. The psychology department found an open textbook and six faculty members customized the book for their students, adjusting the reading level and adding objectives. The textbook implementation had positive results, including higher grade point averages, lower withdrawal rates, and better final exam marks.

2. The BCcampus Open Textbooks Project

- Textbooks can be accessed at open.bccampus.ca.
- In 2012, the BC Ministry of Advanced Education released a mandate for BC to provide 40 free online textbooks for post-secondary students - one in each of the top 40 subject areas.
- In 2014, the BC Ministry announced that 20 additional books will be added for skills and training, and provided one million dollars to fund the project.
- BCcampus is the first province in Canada to work on this type of project.
- Recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Alberta and Saskatchewan to collaborate on open textbook initiatives.
- The main goal is to increase access to higher education by reducing student costs. The project also aims to give faculty more flexibility and improve learning outcomes, measured through research projects.
- The project began by using resources that were already available. The team harvested other textbooks from reliable open textbook sources and posted them in the repository. Faculty reviews moved the adaption of textbooks forward. The reviews are used to ensure the quality of the textbooks and to highlight revisions for use in BC. A space on the website is designated for faculty reviews, which identify the areas for adaptation, the reviewer, and the affiliated institution.
- To date, for the top 40 subject area textbooks, there have been 84 reviewers, 23 institutions involved, 40 texts reviewed, 8 adaptations, and 4 new open textbooks.
- The project uses the Pressbooks platform, which allows authors to upload content once and publish in a variety of formats.
- Most students use the electronic version than the print on demand version.
- 14 institutions in BC have adopted textbooks from the BCcampus repository, as well as other institutions across Canada.

Results

Year	Faculty	Sections	Students	Savings
2013	12	18	553	\$84,560
2014	39	75	2570	\$360,196.50
2015 (Jan-April)	32	71	2202	\$258,285.65
Total	83	164	5325	\$703,042.15

<http://open.bccampus.ca/2015/02/18/calculating-student-savings/>

- Reviewing results: All statistics were based on students buying new textbooks, though this may not be a fair representation due to rental books, used books, and downloads. It is now common to use the average number of \$100 CAD when estimating textbook prices.
- Outreach:
 - Faculty Fellows: three faculty members who take lead responsibilities on open textbook research and advocacy.
 - Memorandum of Understanding with Alberta and Saskatchewan
 - OER Research Hub
 - Creating an [Accessibility Toolkit](#) with CAPER-BC that will be available in March 2015.
 - Partnership with ITA, to develop trades and training textbooks.

3. *BCOER Librarians Group*

- A group of librarians recognized that libraries are well positioned to play a primary role in open textbooks and open educational resources, particularly concerning advocacy and faculty aids. Furthermore, librarians have always been early adopters of technology, with close relationships with faculty and students.
- The group developed from conversations between colleagues and now involves 12 BC post-secondary institutions. The group has been working together for a year, meeting monthly, and is supported by BCcampus.
- They have completed several projects:
 - BCOER Hackfest: In May 2014, the group met for a half-day session to crowdsource ideas relating to current needs and future projects. During the session, the group identified the need for an OER assessment rubric and new advocacy tools. Hackfest resulted in the creation of an [advocacy poster](#), intended to encourage dialogue with faculty, and an [assessment rubric](#).
 - Created an [Open Education Recourses Primer](#) guide, which has been adopted by several CAUL-CBUA Members including StFX, Dalhousie, and NSCC (see additional resources).
 - In June 2014, the group held a community feedback session to identify OER challenges. The challenges identified include awareness, discoverability, quality and longevity, licensing, resistance to change, and knowing about opportunities.
 - In October 2014, the group held a librarians professional development event involving a series of speakers who discussed libraries' roles in supporting OER and similar innovative projects.

4. *Questions*

- Has BCcampus had many experiences with creating textbooks entirely from Wikipedia articles? Select articles have been incorporated into textbooks, but no book has been entirely comprised of Wikipedia articles. There is still a stigma surrounding Wikipedia, even though Wiki articles have been compared to textbooks and prove to have similar content and links.
- The presentation highlighted librarians' involvement in conversations about open textbooks. Are you aware of any librarians involved in creating open textbooks, such as student literacy books?
In 2013, BCcampus held a textbook sprint and created a geology book in one week. A librarian was instrumental in the development of the textbook by finding copyright information and usable materials. Otherwise, the speakers were not aware of any projects involving Librarians creating open textbooks.
- How do you view Amazon's new ability to create books from uploaded materials? Do you think it muddies the water or is it another solution for faculty to create viable textbooks?
Clint noted that Amazon's platform simply takes a document and creates a kindle version. There are many similar projects out there and they all muddy the waters, in a sense. Ultimately, by removing the middle man and creating textbooks at a lower cost for faculty, these products are beneficial for both faculty and students.
- Can you share any experiences concerning resistance from campus bookstores, especially in cases when the bookstore is a commercial enterprise?
The speakers have not spoken directly with many bookstores, but believe that bookstores understand that high textbook costs affect student learning. Open textbooks are only one of the challenges that bookstores are facing today. In the US, commercially owned campus bookstores are more common.
- Is there any data available on how many students simply don't buy textbooks?
No specific data source was mentioned, but it is an occurrence that the speakers have heard

often. There is also a rise in students who purchase textbooks offshore for considerably cheaper, or find other options online.

- Why does this project focus on open textbooks rather than broader open education?
Changing the focus from OER to open textbooks has been beneficial for the project, though its only one piece of the puzzle. Since more people are familiar with open textbooks, it acts as an entry point into the conversation.
- Was the faculty review rubric new or revised?
The rubric was revised from a previously existing rubric, with permission.
- Were other platforms, such as Scalar, explored before choosing Pressbooks?
BCcampus did an extensive search when the project first began. Pressbooks was chosen because it is built on Wordpress and the faculty testers found it easier to use. Also, while Pressbooks is open source, BCcampus were able to purchase a plug-in product allowing for quality PDF print output.

5. *The UPEI Open Textbook Project*

- October 2012: UPEI President and Student Union President asked for an investigation of options for Open Textbooks, with the goal to reduce students' costs.
- An Open Textbook Project Committee was formed and meets monthly, comprised of the University Librarian (Chair), one librarian, 3 faculty members (Science, Business, Arts), a course designer, a student retention manager, the bookstore manager, and a SU representative.
- The committee's terms:
 - review current textbook costs and approaches to the provision of textbooks on campus;
 - review current best practices in the larger North American university community;
 - identify options and innovative ways to provide textbooks or equivalent print and online equivalents, including the initiation of pilot projects;
 - develop decision making guidelines to assist faculty when selecting a text;
 - make recommendations to help minimize textbook costs to students while ensuring a high quality learning context.
- The first year of the project involved increasing communication between the committee members and faculty, highlighting the challenges associated with the high cost of textbooks, and analyzing first year textbook costs.
- During the first year pilot project, open textbooks were introduced for 8 courses. Students also had the option to buy a print version at a low cost, which were printed at UPEI's Library.
- The library is using Pressbooks to host Open Textbooks, and has plans to introduce two additional books in 2015.
- To date, efforts have saved an estimated \$200,000 over two years.
- Committee Recommendations:
 - establish a standing committee of the Academic Planning Committee;
 - develop best-practice guidelines;
 - provide online framework with accessibility support;
 - convert more 1st-year courses;
 - encourage Creative Commons Attribution, Share Alike for UPEI works;
 - work more closely with the bookstore for distribution;
 - survey to determine current practices and interest.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Webinar recording of the [BCcampus Open Textbook Presentation](#)
- Mark Leggott's [Slideshow Presentation](#)
- [Guide to Approaching and Evaluating Open Textbooks](#), created by the CAUL-CBUA Scholarly Communications Committee.
- [Open Textbook LibGuide](#)